

# Israel's Strategy for Peace and Security

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Shimon Peres \(/experts/shimon-peres\)](/experts/shimon-peres)

Shimon Peres was a leading Israeli statesman and Nobel laureate whose political career spanned seven decades and included service as president, prime minister, defense minister, and foreign minister of the State of Israel.



Brief Analysis

**O**n May 1, 2001, Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres addressed The Washington Institute's Special Policy Forum. The following are excerpts from his remarks. [Read a full transcript. \(/policy-analysis/view/israels-strategy-for-peace-and-security-full-transcript\)](/policy-analysis/view/israels-strategy-for-peace-and-security-full-transcript)

## Overview of the Current Situation

"We are passing through a very demanding corridor of politics and exchanges, of an emotional crisis of blame and accusations where the voice of peace is minor and occasionally words may be as dangerous as bullets. We have to stop both the incitement and the fire. My real optimism is that I am convinced that sooner or later — and better sooner — all of us will recognize there is no alternative but to return to the table of negotiation, and part from the bloody battlefields that do not produce solutions."

"Late [Egyptian] president [Anwar] Sadat used to say that 95 to 99 percent of the problems in the Middle East are of a psychological nature, and psychologically we are deeply in distress . . . The Palestinians are angry with us because of the situation in the territories, which I must admit is very, very poor. And also because of the intifada in which they have lost many lives. The Israelis are angry with the Palestinians because they feel in Camp David and Taba, the Palestinians were offered the most generous proposals — 96 percent of the land with a 3 percent swap which is 99 percent, actually 100 percent, and a position on Jerusalem which was unprecedented — and we don't understand why they didn't accept. The Palestinians say they are fighting against occupation, but in Camp David and Taba the offer was to end occupation without any bullets, without any bombs. In spite of it one should not lose hope. I do not believe the Palestinians can achieve anything with bullets and bombs — they will make Israel more united and tougher. And I don't think Israel can stop bullets and bombs with other bullets and bombs. We cannot solve force with force; there must be an end to force."

## Israel and the Palestinian Authority

"On our part in Israel, we have decided to change the situation in the territories unilaterally and unconditionally . . . We have decided to increase the number of permits for Palestinians to work in Israel . . . from 4,000 to 20,000 — 20,000 are already working meaning 40,000 in all. We have decided to raise the number of permits for [commercial vehicles] from 1,000 to 5,000 and to lift all the restrictions on exports and imports to the territories. We have decided

to open up the traffic within the territories without any disturbances so there will be a natural flow of people and goods, and have decided to facilitate the movement of cargo within the territories, among the territories, and with the outside world . . . As I have said, this is not part of any bazaar, it's not a quid pro quo, it's policy of our government because we feel there should be no collective punishment, that the civilians should not suffer, that the economic situation must be improved as soon and as much as possible."

"We don't intend to intervene in [Palestinian] internal policies, contrary to all the rumors. We would like to be of help to the Palestinian leadership, not to make them fall. Because the better they will be, the stronger they will be, a better partner we shall have, a better neighbor we shall have. But they have to show leadership, and usually it's very hard to run a country when [they] have more than one armed force, and in the territories you have in addition to the armed force of the autonomy, you have the armed forces of the Jihad, and of Hamas, and recently also Hizballah. There cannot be leadership if you cannot really control your arms. We saw that the same system destroyed Lebanon . . ."

"[Yasir] Arafat was elected, he is our partner, and even if he commits mistakes, we know that partners can commit mistakes . . . We don't demonize the Palestinians, we demonize terror. We have nothing against the Palestinians, they are our neighbors, they will be our partners, they are like us, people that went through tragedies and suffering."

### **Arafat and Violence**

"[The violence has continued] because there are some dissident groups, and partly because the forces under Arafat are not disciplined. They themselves participate, some of them, in the shooting and killing occasionally without even the knowledge of Arafat and without bringing it to his attention. But the Palestinians must show a capacity for central control of discipline and of performance . . . The task of the Palestinian leadership is to bring all arms under one roof . . . otherwise, they will pay, in my judgment a very heavy price in the eyes of world public opinion."

### **Peace Negotiations**

"A paper cannot replace negotiations or come prior to negotiations. If you want to return to the negotiations you have to respect the principle that whatever was agreed to should be implemented, provided it be done by both parties, and whatever is not agreed should be negotiated. We are trying to come back to a negotiating occasion. Part of it must be done discreetly . . . [But] is also very hard . . . to negotiate when there is terror and violence. In an air of shooting and killing you cannot talk sense, you cannot talk about compromises..."

"We do not yet have an agreement, but we do have an understanding by all parties that if the first things will be first, then we shall have second things coming second. The first thing is really a cease-fire, and not only a cease-fire, to be fair to the Palestinian position, but a cease-fire and a change in the conditions in the territories; and number two, a redeployment of the Israeli forces to the point that existed prior to the current crisis. These are the three points as an opening position. Then we shall enter in permanent status negotiations...I think some of the issues are not yet ready for a solution. You cannot force a solution ahead of time."

### **The Role of the United States**

"When it comes to the negotiations themselves, we prefer them to be face-to-face with the United States serving as a facilitator, not a supreme mediator or supreme negotiator. I think we've learned from experience that we can achieve more [through] a direct dialogue between the parties and the United States serving a role of a bridge-builder, supporter, facilitator, but otherwise letting us sit together and work out the compromises."

### **Lebanon**

"Today Lebanon does not exist in fact. You have not one Lebanon but three armed groups. We fulfilled completely UN Security Council Resolution 425, according to the secretary-general. According to that resolution, the Lebanese army is supposed to redeploy itself alongside the border. The Syrians wouldn't let them, and by not letting them they

permitted the Hizballah to position itself alongside the border and shoot at Israel. As I have said the Hizballah claims that they have expelled our army. They forget that they forced us to come in. We don't want to return. Prime Minister [Rafiq] Hariri comes here [to Washington] and explains his position as a result of his political weakness, but we cannot compensate for his weakness. If you want to have a country you have to take certain measures to run it. You cannot allow it to run wild – it's unforgivable. Lebanon was destroyed by the terrorists, and we pray to the Lord that Lebanon return to herself...There is nobody more interested in a united, independent, peaceful Lebanon more than Israel."

*This Special Policy Forum Report was prepared by Michael Moskowitz.*



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